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LETTER DATED 24 FEBRUARY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter dated 23 February 1999 from Mr. Tariq Aziz, Deputy Prime Minister and Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, concerning contracts for spare parts for the oil sector in phase IV of the oil-for-food programme and the action taken by the representatives of the United States of America and the United Kingdom to put these contracts on hold in the Security Council Committee established by resolution 661 (1990) on flimsy pretexts in order to damage Iraq. Your personal intervention is requested with a view to having the spurious holds on these contracts lifted immediately, in keeping with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1175 (1998).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Saeed H. HASAN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Letter dated 23 February 1999 from the Deputy Prime Minister and Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq addressed to the Secretary-General

I refer to my letter of 26 October 1998 to you (S/1998/996) and your letter dated 15 April 1998 addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1998/330), in which you recommended that the Security Council should authorize Iraq to import spare parts and equipment valued at $300 million in accordance with lists to be prepared by the relevant Iraqi authorities, in cooperation with the group of experts from the Saybolt Company, and incorporated in the categorized list annexed to the procurement and distribution plan for phase IV that was subsequently approved by you on 29 May 1998. On that basis, the Security Council endorsed your recommendation in its resolution 1175 (1998) of 19 June 1998.

More than eight months have passed since resolution 1175 (1998) was adopted. I should like to inform you of the situation with respect to contracts for spare parts for the oil sector as at 16 February 1999. A total of 513 contracts have been submitted to the secretariat of the Security Council Committee established by resolution 661 (1990). Of these, 455 have been distributed to the members of the Committee, and the Committee has approved 347 of them, while 102 are still on hold, no final disposition having been made as yet.

The representatives of the United States of America and the United Kingdom on the Committee have resorted to the same flimsy pretexts that they have routinely used in the past, namely that the spare parts and equipment in question are unrelated to increased exports of oil and may be dual-purpose items, that they are not included in the oil-for-food programme, and that more time is needed to obtain additional data or for further technical evaluation by the Committee.

In reality, these delaying tactics on the part of the representatives of the United States of America and the United Kingdom seek only to further a political aim of their respective Governments, namely, to inflict damage on Iraq. It is noteworthy that after a protracted period of delaying tactics and the passage of a substantial length of time, a hold may be lifted even though there have been no alterations or amendments to the contract concerned or to any of its terms or specifications. This shows that the contract had essentially been put on hold for reasons unrelated to those originally alleged by the above-mentioned representatives.

The conduct of the representatives of the United States of America and the United Kingdom is indicative of the animosity of those countries' Administrations toward Iraq and its people, and of their persistent efforts to prevent the oil sector from obtaining the supplies and inputs it needs in order to maintain and develop its production system. Those efforts coincide with a campaign undertaken by the Governments in Washington and London to undermine Iraq's security and stability and interfere in its internal affairs.

While we appreciate your efforts, we seek your personal intervention with the Security Council Committee established by resolution 661 (1990) in order to urge the expeditious processing of contracts for the purchase of oil-related spare parts and equipment and the immediate lifting of the spurious holds placed on pending contracts, in keeping with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1175 (1998).

As I await whatever measures you may take, I request you to have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Tariq AZIZ